



# Scotts Bluff National Monument

## *Long-Range Interpretive Plan*



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Prepared by the Department of Interpretive Planning  
Harpers Ferry Center  
and  
Scotts Bluff National Monument

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Mitchell Pass  
Past and Present

# INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING BACKGROUND

## Introduction

Scotts Bluff National Monument contains 3,003.03 acres of prairie and bluff habitat situated in the panhandle region of western Nebraska. The monument abuts the North Platte River adjacent to Gering, Nebraska, and is also adjacent to the City of Scottsbluff in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska. The massive 800-foot high promontory was well known to American Indians living in and traveling through the area, and it later became a notable landmark and resting place along the Oregon/California/Mormon and Pony Express Trails during the early to middle nineteenth century.

The monument was established in 1919 by Presidential Proclamation. It is recognized primarily for its historical significance and unique geological features, the latter consisting of steep, rocky, siltstone and sandstone bluffs, ridges which extend from them, and areas of badland formations. The monument also contains significant fossil deposits within its geological strata.

Scotts Bluff National Monument's visitor center and support facilities are located approximately two miles west of Gering along Old Oregon Trail Road. The visitor center complex, along with the Summit Road, tunnels, and Saddle Rock Trail to the summit were constructed primarily by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the Great Depression years. Another footpath follows remnants of the historic westward migration trails, and a bicycle path connects with one recently developed by the city.

## Planning Background

Scotts Bluff National Monument does not have a long-range interpretive plan (LRIP). A general

management plan (GMP) was completed in 1998 which made a number of recommendations for improving the park's interpretive media and facilities.

The visitor center was built by the CCC, and the current exhibits were installed in the late 1950s. The interior space is now inadequate in terms of size and circulation patterns to accommodate today's visitation and current approaches to interpretive media. The public area includes the History Room, the Landmark Room, and the Jackson Gallery.

The cooperating association bookstore incorporates space within one exhibit area as well as the entrance lobby, making both areas overcrowded and interruptive of the interpretive messages; and since there is no theater, the very old slide program is shown in the Landmark Room, where additional exhibits are located. Limited space for the bookstore has thwarted the park's desire to increase the scope and variety of sales items, and combining the exhibit area with a theater results in regularly interrupted experiences for visitors each time the slide show is presented.

In addition to exhibits interpreting aspects of the park themes and resources, the facility also houses in the cultural resource vault the large and unique William Henry Jackson collection of original art illustrating the emigrant trails. The lack of adequate museum exhibit space, appropriate museum-quality lighting, and a climate control system prevents the park from exhibiting original pieces of this nationally significant resource; however, the park does display copies of the art. The wayside exhibits also are old and



do not comply with current NPS graphic identity standards. The park's interpretive media should be improved with respect to interpreting multiple perspectives, current scholarship, and the compelling meanings associated with the park's resources.

The neighboring sites of Chimney Rock National Historic Site and Fort Laramie National Historic Site also interpret aspects of the Emigrant Trail story. Locally significant emigrant trail sites include: Ash Hollow State Historical Park, Pioneer Trails Museum, North Platte Valley Museum, and Guernsey Oregon Trail Ruts National Landmark near Guernsey, and Register Cliff (Wyoming). Since many visitors experience all of these national sites during their travels, and at least a few of the locally significant sites, the LRIP will strive to define distinct interpretive themes for Scotts Bluff National Monument that complement the themes of other areas, thereby creating a comprehensive, unified experience of the Emigrant Trail for visitors to the three primary national sites.

The park also desires to improve and expand education and outreach opportunities, continue and/or expand existing partnerships, and

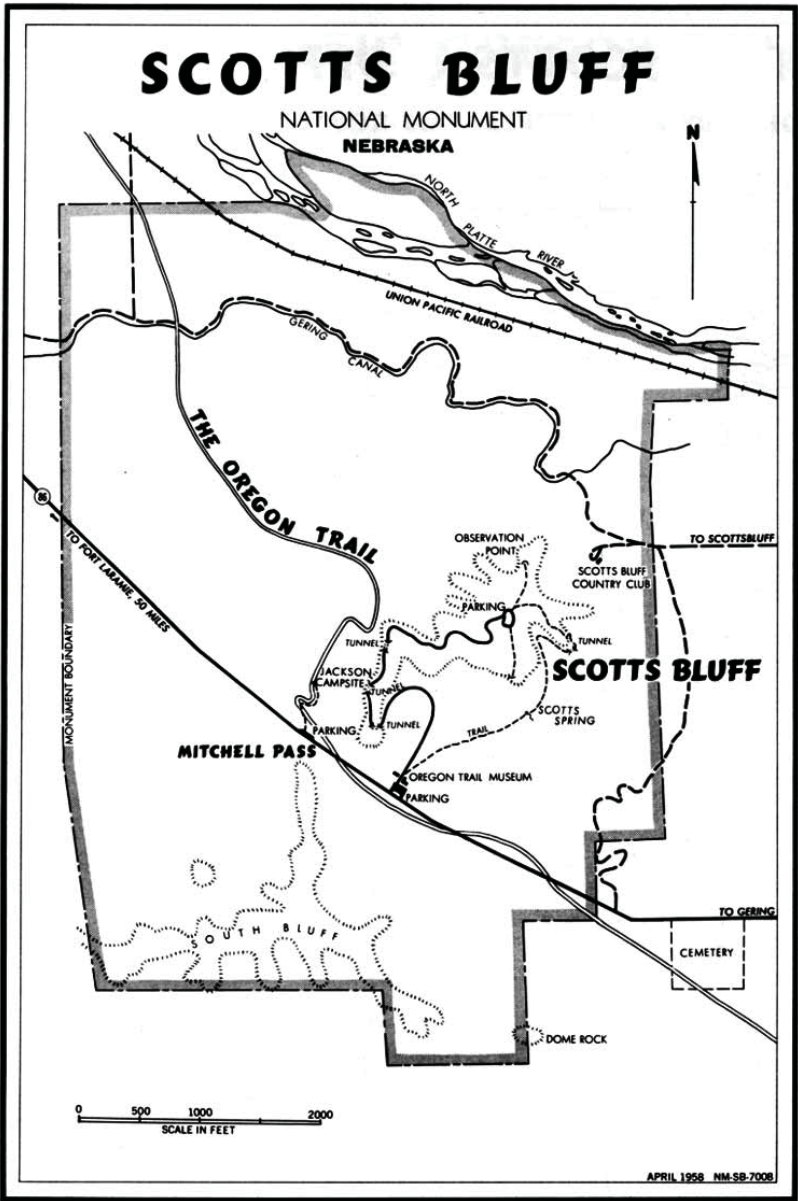
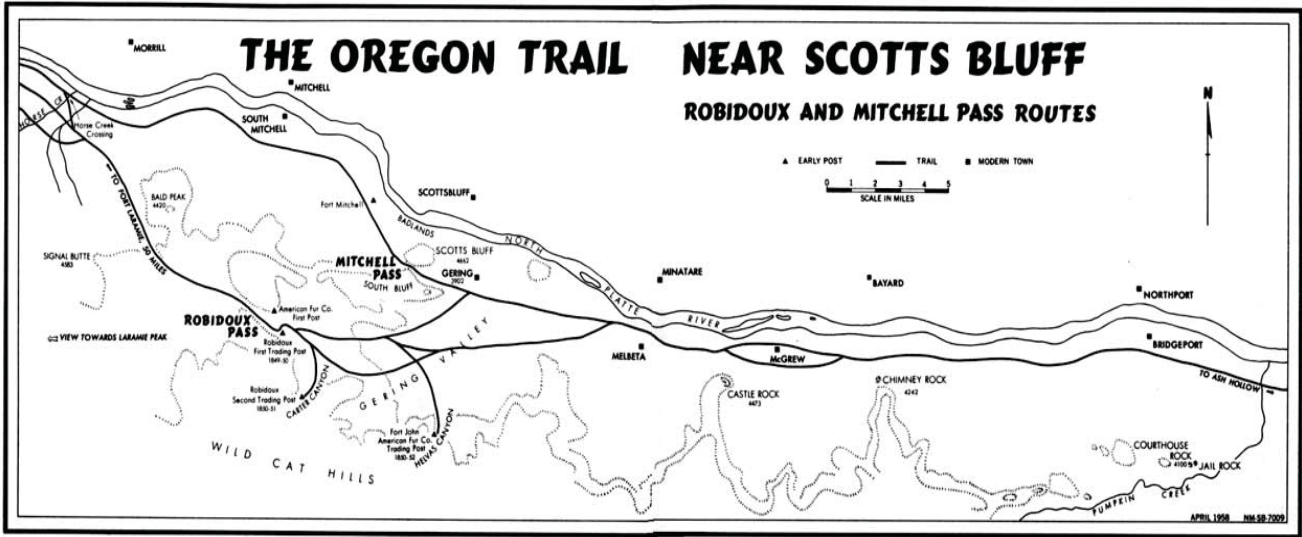
create a stronger identity with visitors and area residents.

*A planning team from the Midwest Regional Office is working in conjunction with this LRIP to develop redesign options and improved space utilization for the visitor center. The team will use the LRIP process to determine the essential services and interpretive media that the visitor center must house. Both teams will consider the potential for outdoor orientation exhibits and other outdoor interpretive experiences to decrease the need for space in the Visitor Center for similar services.*

This LRIP will be a component of the park's Comprehensive Interpretive Plan (CIP) as directed by National Park Service Director's Order-6. This plan will provide long-term direction and focus for the interpretive program for Scotts Bluff National Monument. Together with the park-produced annual interpretive plan and the interpretive database, it will form a complete CIP. The LRIP will describe the park's primary interpretive themes and visitor experiences, and recommend ways to facilitate those experiences through facility design, interpretive/informational media, personal services programs, and partnership endeavors.

Scotts Bluff





## Park Purpose

Purpose statements describe the reasons for which a park area was established. These statements are based on an area's enabling legislation and legislative history.

The purpose of Scotts Bluff National Monument is to:

- Preserve and interpret the history of the Platte River transportation corridor and the influence of Scotts Bluff on these routes.
- Provide access to, preserve, and interpret the view from the top of Scotts Bluff.
- Preserve and interpret the geological processes and features of Scotts Bluff and adjacent landforms.
- Preserve the prairie ecosystem around the bluffs as it was used by American Indians, emigrants, and frontier people.
- Preserve and interpret the monument's cultural resources which include archeological sites, Oregon Trail, California Trail, and Pony Express Trail remnants, historic buildings, museum collections, and cultural landscape.

## Significance

Significance is summarized in statements that capture the essence of a site's importance to our natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements are not the same as an inventory of significant resources. While a resource inventory can be the basis, significance statements describe the importance or distinctiveness of the aggregate resources. Knowing a site's significance helps set resource protection priorities, identify

primary interpretive themes, and develop desirable visitor experiences.

The resources of Scotts Bluff National Monument are significant for the following reasons:

- Along this transportation corridor passed many different people including American Indians, fur traders/trappers, explorers, pathfinders, Oregon settlers, soldiers, fortune hunters bound for California, Mormon pioneers, freighters, road ranch operators, Pony Express riders, and telegraph and railroad construction workers.
- The summit of Scotts Bluff provides views for miles of the North Platte River transportation corridor. Resting travelers often mentioned the bluffs in their recollections. The area's badlands forced the trail to divert from the North Platte River through Robidoux and Mitchell Passes where trail remnants still exist.
- Scotts Bluff offers a unique setting for the study and appreciation of the many trails that have traversed the North Platte River Valley. These trails have evolved from the time of the earliest Plains inhabitants 8,000 to 10,000 years ago, through modern American Indian peoples, through the fur trade era, during the period of the various westward migration routes of the nineteenth century, and up to contemporary developments.
- The monument's museum contains the largest single collection of paintings by photographer/artist William Henry Jackson, one of the greatest chroniclers of the Oregon Trail and the westward migration. These 65 paintings dramatically,



but accurately, portray scenes of American frontier life seldom fully captured by written description or photography, including depictions of the Oregon Trail, Pony Express, the California Gold Rush, and the Mormon Exodus.

- Scotts Bluff National Monument offers a nearly intact example of a Civilian Conservation Corps construction and development project.
- Scotts Bluff offers opportunities to explore the geologic features and processes that influenced the location of the historic trails, and to study the rocks as a textbook of the last 33 million years of geologic time.

## Interpretive Themes

Primary interpretive themes are those ideas/concepts that are critical for achieving visitor understanding and appreciation of the significance of Scotts Bluff National Monument. Primary themes do not include everything that may be interpreted, but they do provide the foundation from which programs and media are developed. All interpretive efforts, through both personal and non-personal services, should relate to one or more of the primary themes. Effective interpretation results when visitors are able to connect concepts (intangibles) with resources (tangibles) and derive something meaningful from the experience.

The following interpretive themes are critical to visitor understanding and appreciation of the park's importance. The numbers are strictly for reference and do not signify any prioritization.

1. The wide diversity of humans who have used the North Platte River Valley transportation corridor through time shared common experiences in the challenges and opportunities they encountered.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

- The river as a transportation corridor and as a source of water.
- That the corridor was used by both people and other animals.
- The use of different types of transportation.
- That some of the common trail experiences included: river crossings, sickness, scenery, weather, insects, snakes, lack of firewood, and the newness of almost everything.
- That while people did share common experiences, they did not always see it that way at the time.
- That trail emigrants viewed Scotts Bluff as a milestone of achievement and a transition from the flat plains to the challenges of the Rocky Mountains and beyond.
- The landmark produced a psychological sense of achievement as well as anticipation and anxiety for what still lay ahead.

2. Ongoing human use and manipulation of the North Platte River Valley transportation corridor over time has altered the area's natural resources and the way of life of its Native inhabitants.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

- The extermination of the buffalo and other wild game from the plains and its effect on the American Indians and the prairie environment.
- How the American Indians and trappers influenced vegetation and migration patterns of big game through the use of fire and hunting.
- How the trail emigrants and American Indians used and



Fort Mitchell (W.H. Jackson)



Wagon train approaching Chimney Rock (W.H. Jackson)

changed the land resulting in the reduction of grasses.

- How the settlers (ranchers, farmers, and communities) used and changed the land resulting in reducing the flow of the river and the introduction of exotic species.
- The current and long-term impacts of climate change in the plains ecosystem.
- That the trail and railroad created a north/south divide that has impacted migration routes and the range of various species.

3. Scotts Bluff illustrates the geologic processes and uniquely visible features that have defined and constrained routes to the west, provided a window to changing environments, and continued to fascinate travelers.



Badlands

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

- That the geologic features serve as important landmarks for travel.
- That the water courses were defined by geologic processes and also influenced the development of routes west.
- That geologic features and fossil components relate to the story of changing environments and climates over time.
- That while erosion continues, more resistant rocks help protect the landforms.
- That human fascination with unusual features led to many interesting place names.



Indian Village (W.H. Jackson)

4. Indians have long inhabited the region and moved across the plains through the Scotts Bluff area. They established important trade routes long before the coming of Euro-Americans, and have maintained long physical and spiritual connections with the land.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

- That some enterprising people came to provide supplies to the immigrants and the military.
- The various trade routes that were established over time.
- The seasonal movements of Native people as they followed game sources.
- The various tribes that lived in or passed through the area.
- Interactions and interconnections among different tribes.
- Changing social structures and the reasons for them over time.
- Positive and negative impacts of contacts with Euro-Americans.
- The significance of the bluffs and other landforms to Indian people.
- The American Indians are still here and actively engaged with the land.

5. The wide diversity of Euro-Americans who passed by Scotts Bluff mirrored the growing diversity of social, political, cultural, and economic forces within the young United States.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

- The variety of reasons for making the journey west.
- That some people went back east, also for a variety of reasons.
- Who they were and where they were going.
- That some viewed the trail as basically a way to reach their destination, while others such as the Mormons, were paving a route for others to follow.

6 Late 19th century military necessities and economic factors brought improvements to the transportation corridor.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

- The role of the military and Fort Mitchell in protecting travelers and supplies on the trail.
- The role of the military and Fort Mitchell in making significant improvements to the corridor.
- That some of these types of improvements continue today.

7. William Henry Jackson's art, based on his personal experiences, helped memorialize all four trails, and provided a contrast between legend and reality.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

- The importance of personal accounts in the preservation of history.
- That the moments that Jackson captured visually cannot be recreated.
- That others like Ezra Meeker also helped to memorialize the historic trails.
- That along with Meeker, Jackson and others made knowing or unknowing contributions toward the birth of the National Park Service and the National Trail System and inspired some of the people who pushed for the establishment of Scotts Bluff National Monument.
- That Jackson revealed the beauty and grandeur of the land to many who would never have an opportunity to see it in person.

8. The majority of the monument's existing administrative, maintenance, and visitor service complex, which was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), illustrates one response of the government to the Great Depression by

putting young men to work building facilities and preserving, protecting, and interpreting the Nation's natural and cultural heritage.

Interpretation of this theme will help visitors better understand and appreciate:

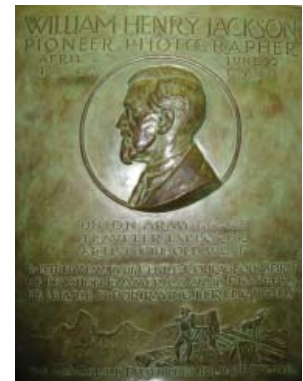
- That the CWA started and the CCC continued construction of the road and tunnels to the summit (the oldest concrete road as well as the only three passenger vehicle tunnels in the state of Nebraska).
- That the CCC built a foot trail to the summit, including the tunnel through the rock face.
- That the visitor center and maintenance buildings were built to serve their respective purposes.
- That bricks were made from badlands mud.
- That the Work Projects Administration (WPA) constructed the exhibit dioramas and the Conestoga model.

Draft Trailwide Interpretive Themes (Revised from 1999 Comprehensive Management Plan)

In addition to the park-specific themes, the four historic trails that pass through or within sight of Scotts Bluff are part of the NPS National Trails System. A separate LRIP for these four trails is underway at roughly the same time as this LRIP, and trailwide interpretive themes are also being developed. Since interpretation at Scotts Bluff National Monument should include the broader contexts of the trailwide themes, they are included here (see Appendix B) for use and reference.

## Visitor Experience Goals

Few visitors come to parks just to learn. While interpretive themes



W.H. Jackson Plaque



Tunnels on the Summit Road built by the CCC

can be viewed as cognitive goals (things people should learn), visitor experience goals describe what other physical, intellectual, sensory, and emotional experiences should be available. It is what visitors do, feel, think, and learn which includes knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and values. The overall visitor experience is affected by events prior to the visit and affects behavior after the visit.

Visitors come to parks seeking something of personal value and relevance. Since interpretive themes address the cognitive elements, visitor experience goals outline other available opportunities that visitors should be aware of as they interact with park and area resources, staff, and other visitors.

Visitors to and local residents of Scotts Bluff National Monument will have opportunities to:

- Learn something about each of the interpretive themes.
- View the scenic/historic panorama.
- Experience some of the things that our forefathers did.
- Get a sense of western scale.
- Discover the different cultural perspectives regarding Scotts Bluff.
- See wildlife and native plants.
- Enjoy a sense of adventure.
- Find time for personal reflection.
- Find solitude.
- Exercise
- Be aware of local climate/weather conditions.
- Purchase interpretive/educational materials.
- Have a safe visit.
- Enjoy William Henry Jackson's original works.
- Interact with NPS staff.
- Experience a variety of interpretive programs.
- Plan their visit to meet personal interests, abilities, and time constraints.
- Learn about other theme related resources in the area and beyond.
- Easily find the park and other

places where they may want to go.

- Practice personal and cultural traditions.
- Become aware of resource management issues and ways they can get involved.
- Develop a sense of stewardship.
- Become aware of the park's sustainable design/use practices.
- Find and use accessible resources, media, and programs.
- Identify important features in the park landscape.
- Discover something relevant for people of different backgrounds and perspectives.
- Have opportunities for physical challenges.
- Walk in the footsteps of American Indians, pioneers, and others.

## Visitation and Visitor Use

The following information regarding park visitors and visitor use is derived from data maintained by the NPS Socio-Economic Services Division (WASO) in Denver, a 1991 visitor survey, the GMP, the Servicewide Interpretive Report, and discussions with park staff and partners.

Table 1 shows the total number of recreation visits to Scotts Bluff National Monument over the last 10 years. This table clearly shows a steady decline in annual recreation visits until 2006. Actually, total annual visitation has shown a general decline since a high of 217,522 in 1978; however, there has now been a marked increase in 2007.

Table 2 below illustrates the total monthly recreation visits for 2007. The bell curve pattern with a peak in the summer is typical for northern parks with cold winters.



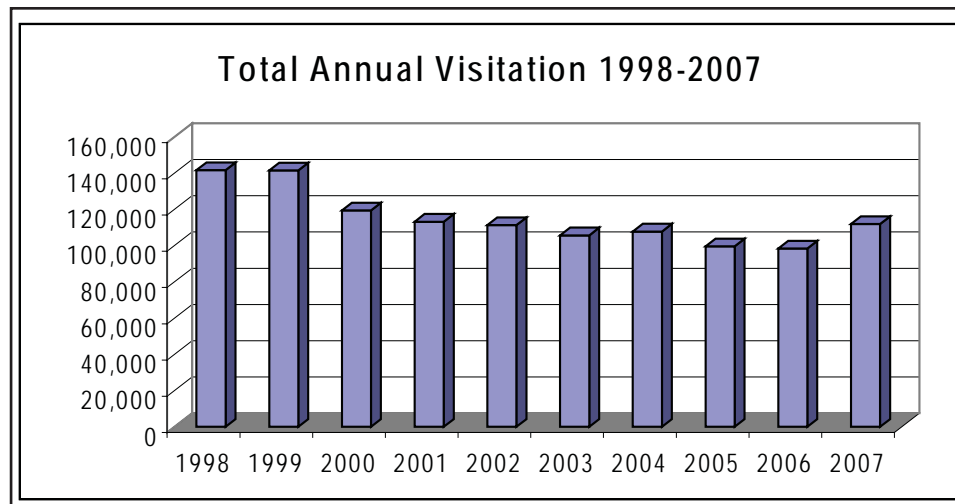


Figure 1

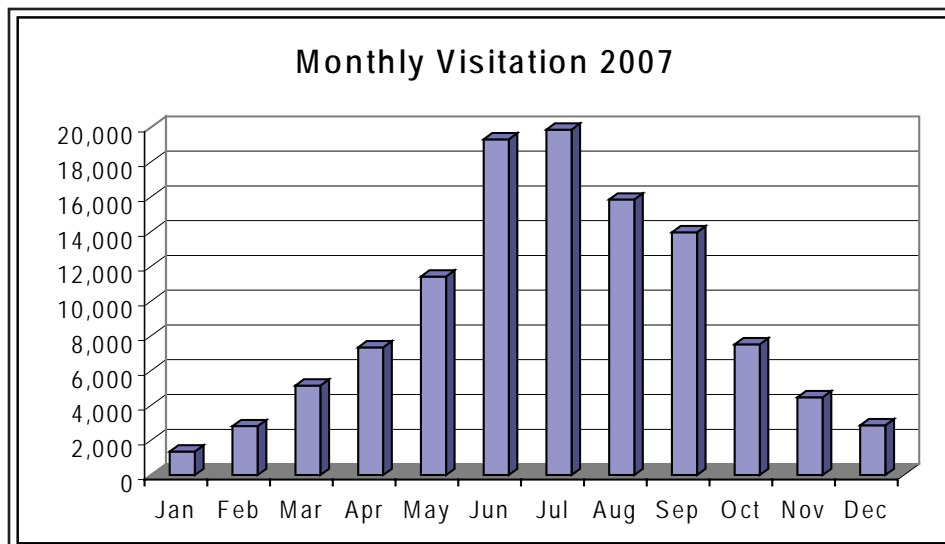


Figure 2

Other cumulative data for 2007 from the park's Monthly Public Service Report states that:

- About 4,700 passengers rode the shuttle bus to the summit.
- 2,267 Museum talks were given.
- 36,151 people entered the visitor center (This represents only about 1/3 of the total annual visitation)
- 21 Bus tours entered to the park.
- 52 School buses entered the park.
- 1,313 visitors attended one or more of 49 interpretive demonstrations or performances.
- 407 people participated in the Junior Ranger Program.
- 2,187 people attended a special event at the park.
- 2,220 students participated in an on-site park education program.
- 12,032 people attended the park audiovisual program.

The park's submission to the 2007 Servicewide Interpretive Report shows that:

- 8,175 people were reached through informal interpretation.
- 4,866 visitors attended one or more of 729 formal interpretive activities.

To assist the park in complying with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) a Visitor Survey Card (VSC) satisfaction survey was conducted during FY06. The results indicated that 96% of park visitors were satisfied with the overall park facilities, services and recreational opportunities. Some of the more specific data revealed that:

- 97% were satisfied with the walkways, trails, and roads.
- 96% were satisfied with the outdoor recreation opportunities.
- 95% were satisfied with the park ranger programs.
- 93% were satisfied with the park map & brochure.
- 93% were satisfied with what they learned about the park's nature, history, and culture.
- 92% were satisfied with the assistance they received from park employees.
- 90% of visitors were satisfied with the exhibits.
- 83% of visitors were satisfied with the overall visitor center experience.
- 70% were satisfied with the restrooms.

[Note that the three lowest satisfaction ratings were directed at elements of the park visitor center.]

For a number of years, the park has offered a series of evening programs in the amphitheater. Programs are scheduled on Tuesday nights throughout the summer and early fall. Table 3 shows the average attendance at these programs for selected years between 2000 and 2007.

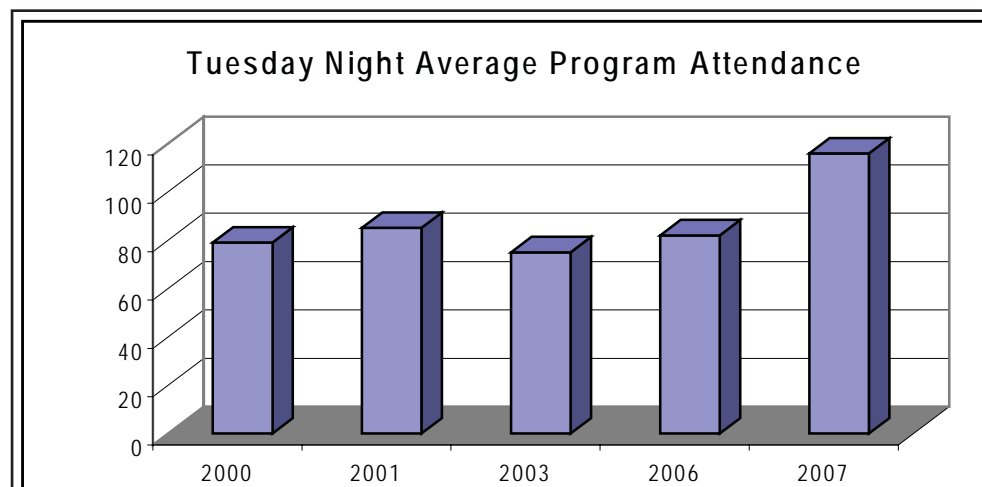
The table clearly shows an overall increase in attendance, with an average of 115.9 people per program in 2007. Attendance at individual

programs between June and September ranged from a high of 360 to a low of 63.

The Cooperative Park Studies Unit of the University of Idaho conducted a visitor survey at the park from July 29 – August 4, 1990. The results (which are summarized below) are now over 17 years old, and caution should be used in applying the findings to today's visitors. Caution also is advised in applying the results to visitors at other times of the year. The following is a summary of the survey findings:

- Seventy-three percent of visitors were in family groups.
- Seventy-one percent of visitors were in groups of 2-4 people.
- Forty-two percent of visitors were between 31-55 years old.
- Sixty-seven percent of visitors were on their first trip to Scotts Bluff National Monument.
- Fifty-one percent of visitors came from Nebraska, Illinois, California, and Kansas.
- Four percent of visitors came from foreign countries.
- Ninety-six percent of visitors stayed three hours or less in the park.
- Fifty percent of visitor groups traveled the Summit Road.
- Forty-three percent of visitors used all or part of the Summit Trail.

Figure 3



- Twenty-three percent of visitors visited the Oregon Trail.
- Thirty-five percent of visitors obtained information about the park from previous visits; 35% from maps; and, 34% from travel guides/tour books.
- Fifty-five percent of visitors indicated that they used the park brochure.
- Seventy-seven percent of visitors used the rest rooms at the visitor center.
- Forty-four percent of visitors reported that they would likely use the then proposed shuttle system from the visitor center to the summit.

The 1998 GMP made the following observations regarding visitor use at the park:

- Today's visitors to Scotts Bluff tend to view the monument in a narrow, site-specific context rather than see it as an important link in a series of features related to the region's history.
- For many visitors Scotts Bluff National Monument is a brief stop on their vacation route, which frequently terminates at such areas as Yellowstone National Park or the Black Hills of South Dakota. For others, particularly those with a serious interest in the historic trails, Scotts Bluff is a destination.
- The average visit to the Monument lasts approximately two hours and includes a tour of the Oregon Trail Museum and a brief visit to the summit of Scotts Bluff. A significant number, however, further explore other park resources and participate in living history or other interpretive programs.
- Getting a true picture of the trends in visitation at the park is complicated by the fact that the method of counting visitors has been changed at least twice – in 1980 and 1992. Both of those

years show significant declines in total visitation, some of which is probably accounted for by the change in counting methods.

Finally, estimates of future visitation levels should not be based on how many visitors came in the past, but on how many would come when the visitor center redesign is completed and new media is planned, designed, and installed.

## Existing Conditions, Issues and Influences

The following is a brief and generalized description of visitor experiences, issues, and interpretive media and programs as they existed at the onset of this long-range interpretive planning process. Emphasis purposely is placed on deficiencies, issues, and concerns that will be addressed in the plan's recommendations, rather than on things that are working well or that are beyond the scope of a LRIP. The purpose of this section is to provide a baseline assessment that can help to justify some of the plan's proposed actions.

## Parkwide

While the overall interpretive program is currently being well managed by the Chief Ranger, the park does not have a full-time interpretive specialist or a permanent full-time interpretive park ranger to manage the day-to-day operations and to provide primary leadership and management of the interpretive program. Other reductions in staff have resulted in a shortening of the primary summer/fall interpretive season. The lack of a park historian adversely impacts the overall quality and accuracy of interpretive programs and access to current scholarship in the field. The success of recommendations in this LRIP will hinge largely on the development of a professional

interpretive staff and/or reliance on regional office and Harpers Ferry Center support.

## Information and Orientation

Improvements are needed in providing information to on-line visitors both before and during their visit to the park, as well as for people who may never be able to visit in person.

Improvements are needed in the types and methods of providing on-arrival information/orientation to visitors. This applies to people traveling area highways, staying in local motels, visiting other area attractions, or just arriving in the monument parking lot.



Current Theater/Exhibit Room

Improvements are needed in providing consolidated information regarding area visitor attractions, especially those with strong interpretive links to the park.

The current information desk and lobby area can easily become crowded due to the cross traffic from the two separate exhibit rooms, and currently only about one-third of the total visitors come inside the visitor center. Since

visitors pay their entrance fee at the fee booth during summer months, many choose to drive to the summit of Scotts Bluff without stopping in the visitor center.

## Visitor Center

The need to address the many deficiencies of the current visitor center is a major issue in this LRIP. The building was built by the CCC in the 1930s as a visitor center. The structure now is considered historic and is eligible for the National Register. Another planning team from the Midwest Regional Office is working in concert with this LRIP to develop redesign solutions for the structure that will address the current issues, but still honor the building's historic integrity. The redesign effort also will make recommendations regarding the amphitheater that is immediately adjacent to the visitor center.

Although the issues with the building and its interpretive media have been addressed at length elsewhere, some of the key issues are presented here. These include:

- The exhibits are extremely old (dating from the 1950s) and some inaccuracies exist.

Scotts Bluff National Monument  
Visitor Center & Museum





- The exhibits are static and offer almost no interactivity for children.
- The exhibits are divided into two separate rooms, and visitor circulation is awkward, and at times congested.
- The exhibit space is inadequate for interpreting the numerous and complex stories of Scotts Bluff.
- One of the exhibit rooms doubles as a theater. Seating is very limited, there is no emergency exit, and the dual use is not compatible. The screen hides some exhibits and when the film is running it often interferes with those who want to view the exhibits.
- The bookstore has been placed in the other exhibit room, which further reduces visitor circulation and impacts people viewing the displays.
- The William Henry Jackson gallery, adjacent to one of the exhibit rooms, is was remodeled in February 2008. It also contains two dioramas that are not part of the Jackson collection.
- The slide show shown in the “theater” is very old and outdated. It presents a lot about westward migration, but little specifically about Scotts Bluff.
- The rest rooms are very old and inadequate to serve today’s volume

of visitors. They also do not meet current ADA accessibility standards.

- Administrative and interpretive support facilities (i.e. library, museum collection, etc.) are located in the basement which is cramped and not ADA or fire code compliant.

## Roads and Trails

The majority of signs in the park were planned and produced before the advent of the new NPS graphic identity program authorized by the NPS Director in 2003 and implemented in 2005. The existing signs represent different types and styles and have been installed as needed over the years in response to changing conditions. As a result, they do not speak with one voice in terms of colors, designs, and materials; and they do not conform to the new sign standards in all respects.

The park’s current wayside exhibit system was planned and designed in 1982–83 by Harpers Ferry Center in collaboration with the park. A number of exhibit panels are deteriorated through the effects of sunlight on the polyester resin/fiberglass materials used. While



Current Visitor Center Exhibit



Former display of W.H. Jackson artwork



Wayside exhibit at top of Scotts Bluff



Costumed Interpretation

nearly all wayside exhibit sites have hard surfaced pads, some of the overlook areas are looking stressed from the impact of heavy visitation.

While the trail to the Jackson camp and historic ruts along the Oregon Trail pathway are interpreted with wayside exhibits, many visitors do not use it. The opposite is true for the Saddle Rock Trail; it receives a great deal of use, but little interpretation is provided.

## **Publications**

The park bookstore is managed by the Oregon Trail Museum Association. During the development of this LRIP a separate evaluation of the store and the association was conducted. The results and recommendations of this evaluation are only included by reference here, but they should be implemented in conjunction with appropriate LRIP action items.

Although the bookstore is mentioned on the park web site, virtual visitors are unable to make any purchases.

The current official brochure mainly shows how to get to the park, but most people don't receive the brochure until they arrive.

## **Personal Services**

The park's personal services interpretive program is conducted primarily from Memorial Day to mid-August. Significant visitation and local interest in the park and park programs extend well beyond these dates. Evening programs in the amphitheater are very popular with the local communities; however, the programs can only be offered during good weather. There is no adequate indoor space for these programs (which draw an average of 115 people) even though there is continued interest for them.

## **Education Program**

The park wants to expand its current curriculum-based education program and reinstitute teacher training programs. There also is a need to develop programs jointly with teachers and with partner sites.



Amphitheater Program

The following is a description of program and media recommendations designed to further define, support, and communicate the park's mission, purpose, significance, interpretive themes, and visitor experience goals. Implementation of these recommendations will help ensure that visitors are well prepared and informed, and that they will be able to develop meaningful connections with tangible and intangible resources.

The discussion of each program or media proposal identifies its purpose, special considerations, and sometimes suggests specific means of presentation. It is important to remember that the latter are only suggestions and should not in any way limit the creativity essential during the media and program planning and design processes. On the other hand, proposals will be specific enough to provide meaningful guidance, develop Class C cost estimates, prepare or update PMIS submissions, and define the parameters within which these creative energies can flow.

At least one of the primary interpretive themes makes direct reference to American Indians and their associations with the land now in the park. It is essential that the park maintain a dialogue and active participation with tribal leaders during the planning, design, and production of theme-related media and programs.

### **Information and Orientation**

The park will continue to provide information and orientation through traditional means such as answering phone, mail, and email requests. Responses will continue to be

tailored to specific inquiries, and pre-developed packets of material will continue to be used in handling more common requests. All printed information will contain appropriate phone numbers and addresses, including email addresses, and the park web site url.

All materials, including those produced by outside travel entities, will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain accurate, appropriate, and current. Since many vehicles now have GPS navigation systems, the park should work with these system providers to ensure that they give accurate and most direct instructions for reaching the park.

Other areas for providing pre-arrival park information include any area rest stops on the new proposed Heartland Expressway, and in-room literature and hotel television station broadcasts. In addition, the idea of a tri-park newsletter for Scotts Bluff National Monument, Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, and Fort Laramie National Historic Site should be explored promoting activities and visitation to the three NPS units, and supporting the already available Tri-Park Annual Pass.

The park will continue to enhance its web site, especially the in-depth material and links to related and partner sites, in order to reach larger and more diverse audiences. Links or references to other sites, museums, and programs that deal with theme-related elements should be explored and developed. The cooperating association should establish a web site with a link both to and from the park site, and another link should be established with the NPS National Trail System Office (NTSL) in Salt Lake City.

Various types of downloadable information should be developed so the people can place material on their Ipods, MP3s, CDs, or other devices for use at home, on the road, or when they get to the park.

The park, along with appropriate county, state and federal highway departments, will evaluate the directional sign system and initiate a sign plan request through the Harpers Ferry Center sign program. Regional Office signing officials and Harpers Ferry Center may also be consulted during this process. Directional and entrance signing should utilize the NPS graphic identity standards when feasible.

The value of installing a Traveler's Information System (TIS) will be explored, and if deemed feasible and advantageous, such a system would be purchased and installed. These low-watt radio broadcasting systems can provide short (1-2 minute) informational messages to travelers within a 2-3 mile radius of the park. Information can include park hours of operation, fees, descriptions of available activities, safety precautions, regulations, and other basic information. The messages can be updated by park staff as often as necessary.

With a TIS system, signs along the main approach routes direct travelers to tune their vehicle radios to a specific AM frequency to listen to the message. Past research has shown, however, that only about 20% of visitors to a NPS site actually use the system. Also, problems with sound quality, broadcast distance, and mechanical failures can sometimes arise.

An option (or supplement) to a TIS system could be the use of cell phone technology. The installation of a 511 system (again with signs along major approach routes

instructing travelers to dial this number) would allow people to use their cell phones to receive park information.

Visitors arriving at the park entrance during periods when the fee kiosk is in operation, should receive very basic information (including the official park brochure) and be encouraged to make the visitor center their first stop. Visitors also should be made aware of any available interpretive programs or activities through a simple flyer which includes times and descriptions of events.

From the parking lot, visitors should easily find an informational wayside exhibit that provides orientation to the park as well as information on key resources, interpretive programs, activities, regulations, safety, etc. This exhibit should probably take the form of a shelter to provide shade for visitors and protection for graphic panels, while remaining sensitive to the cultural landscape. In designing and locating this exhibit it will be important to preserve the viewscape of the historic museum building. A portion of this exhibit could incorporate a bulletin case devoted to changeable information. One of the main goals of this exhibit is to lay out the variety of opportunities available in the park. This exhibit would be available at all hours, as well as for visitors who choose not to go inside the visitor center.

The covered wagons near the main entrance are clearly visible as people approach the fee kiosk, especially in the warmer months when the wagon canopies are in place. For some the wagons are magnets which attract visitors as one of their first interpretive stops.



## Visitor Center

As stated in the introduction, a separate planning team from the regional office is working on a major redesign of the visitor center. That team and the LRIP team are working together to ensure that all key structural, visitor circulation, operational, interpretive, and informational media needs are addressed.

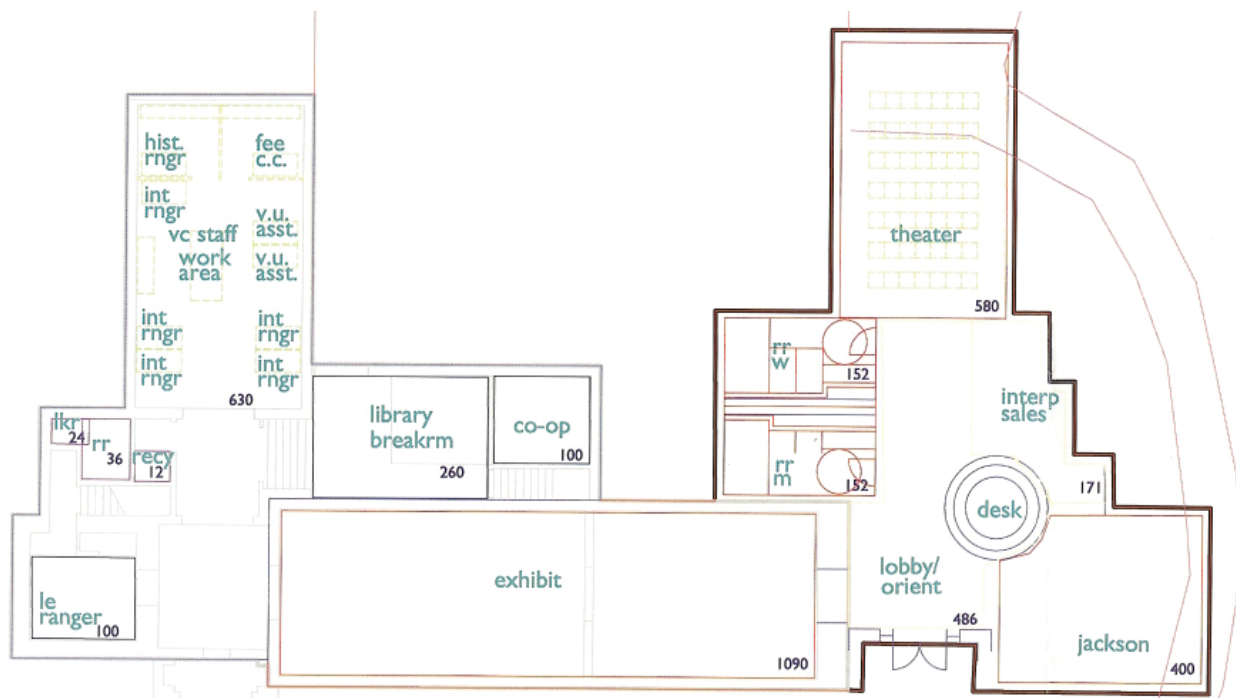
In addition to providing an information/orientation service, the visitor center will interpret the setting of Scotts Bluff and capture the experiences and multiple points of view of the people who lived and traveled through the area. The subheadings below are not intended to necessarily define clear cut spaces, but rather to describe the various functions of the visitor center.

### Approach and Exterior

The facility redesign may change the entry location and experience.

One of the goals will be to provide a more efficient circulation pattern, and to attract more visitors into the building. While one goal is to preserve the historic character of the structure and the CCC-built complex, there are opportunities to add or improve several exterior interpretive elements.

The informational wayside exhibit mentioned earlier would be part of this entry experience as would the relocation of the Pony Express monument. An interpretive wayside exhibit or perhaps a plaque mounted along the walkway to the front door would interpret the role of the CCC at Scotts Bluff. This concept should be further developed in a parkwide wayside exhibit proposal that will be described in a later section of this LRIP. Likewise, other wayside exhibit possibilities on the grounds near the visitor center might interpret the viewsheds, and possibly introduce some geologic concepts. These will be considered



Visitor Center concept design

in the development of the wayside exhibit proposal, and evaluated in light of potential impacts on the historic character of the site.

### **Lobby/Information Desk Area**

Information and orientation also will continue to be an important function inside the visitor center. The redesigned facility will have a staffed information desk that visitors will easily see when they enter the building. The information desk will contain storage and display space for the handouts, maps, and other informational materials used by the staff. The desk area also will be equipped with a telephone, park radio, PA system, remote start switch for the theater program, displays for site bulletins, passport cancellation station, and cash registers for fee collection and cooperating association sales. Displays about other theme-related area attractions also would be developed, and, in turn, park partner sites will be encouraged to do the same.

Creating an immersion experience exhibit in the exhibit area or possibly in the transition from the lobby to the exhibit area is desired. One concept would be to create a life-size enlargement of one of the Jackson paintings along with, AV elements, and reproduction objects to give visitors the illusion that they are part of a wagon train. Even aspects of climate, wind, dust, and other elements could be incorporated. A slightly different version of this concept also was suggested for an outdoor display along the actual trail route.

Other events that could be exhibited in this format might be 1) trading with the Indians, which was often done by the women; 2) a pony express relay; or 3) a noon break or evening camp scene. These settings could be based on diary entries made at or near Scotts Bluff,

and could employ audio as well as reader-rail graphic/text panels. Using life-sized figures of people, and perhaps some animals, might help to emphasize the human elements of the story. In addition to the usual tools and weapons now on exhibit, display objects could include more personal items mentioned in the diaries; for example, a doll, bonnet, diary, family bible, musical instrument, or jewelry item.

### **Exhibit Area**

The overall design of the exhibit area would be open and allow visitors to choose what interests them most, but the design also would attract and entice people to explore and learn about new concepts and themes. At the same time, the design should encourage a flow for those that may need some direction.

Major exhibit groups should have audio components which will appeal to broad learning styles, and will offer added accessibility for those with visual impairments. This will include audio descriptions of the exhibit experience; however, due to the small building, media designers will need to be sensitive to overall noise levels. Tactile elements should be used wherever they will enrich the experience for all, and where they may be critical for accessibility. Consideration should be given to evaluating the effectiveness of a podcast or cell phone tour of the museum. This would provide another way for visitors to receive extended information and interpretation of the museum themes, exhibits, and artifacts, without relying on label reading alone.

Key concepts to be developed in the exhibit area include:

[Note: The bold headings are intended to be conceptual and not prescriptive.]



Wagon Train at Mitchell Pass  
(W.H. Jackson)

**The Big Picture of Human Migration in America.** The focus of this exhibit will be on Theme 5. This concept also could be introduced in the proposed new film; however, since not all visitors will see the film, this should not be the only place it is presented. Designers should consider using the Jackson paintings depicting the history of westward migration over time. The overall picture of the westward migration trails also would be introduced, showing the various routes in their entirety.

The big picture also would present the significance of Scotts Bluff to those traveling the historic and pre-historic routes. Visitors would learn that Scotts Bluff was a major landmark, marking the beginning of a physical (and often psychological) transition from the plains to the Rocky Mountains. Presentation of this concept might also show (perhaps via an interactive element) what future challenges might face a party that arrived at Scotts Bluff at different times of the year.

Harpers Ferry Center has produced a shaded relief United States map generated from satellite data that

could be adapted to show the routes of the relevant overland trails in a national context. This coast-to-coast visualization could be paired with a more local representation of the land, perhaps even a tactile model of the Scotts Bluff area showing Mitchell and Robidoux Passes, the Platte River, and the various transportation and communication routes through the area.

**The People & How They Saw Each Other.** The focus of this exhibit will be on Themes 1 & 4. This concept would illustrate the many different people associated with the trails and the area, and present (often in their own words) how they viewed each other. Examples might include how the Indians and emigrant trail travelers saw each other, or how the Oregon Trail travelers viewed those on the Mormon Trail and vice versa. From this exhibit visitors could discover the complexity of human relations and the conflict and cooperation that often occurred. The exhibit might also allow visitors to pick a historic person and follow their experiences from Scotts Bluff to their destination.

Other aspects of this exhibit concept would include showing when various people came through, and why they elected to make the journey. All of these elements should rely heavily on first-hand written and oral accounts. One of the most powerful objects in the museum now is a rock bearing the signature of William Webber, an emigrant who came through Mitchell Pass in 1852, one of the peak years of migration.

Consultation with associated American Indian tribes will be needed to include their stories and views. This aspect of the “people” exhibit should highlight examples of conflicts and cooperation with trail travelers, trade, impacts on culture and life ways, and the separation of myth from fact. Visitors also would learn that American Indians have long had and continue to have cultural and spiritual connections with Scotts Bluff and the surrounding area.

**William Henry Jackson.** This exhibit will focus on Theme 7. As one of the park’s significant resources, visitors will have opportunities to view the Jackson art collection, especially those pieces that relate directly to Scotts Bluff. While reproduction images will need to be used in most settings, people should be able to experience at least a few original pieces. These would be displayed in environmentally controlled conservation cases on a rotating basis, which also would serve to draw repeat visitation to see the new displays.

Another aspect of this exhibit concept should invite visitor interaction by eliciting their comments about the scenes depicted in the paintings. A computer interactive also could provide electronic visuals of the entire Jackson collection. In all cases, new

digital scans of the paintings need to be made.

Besides the paintings, William Henry Jackson himself would be interpreted. His life, his direct association with the historic trails, and the processes of creating his art would be presented. An audio element using Jackson’s own words might add another dimension to this exhibit. Consideration also would be given to other people who illustrated their trail experiences, and to developing opportunities for visitors to create their own images or to make their own journal entry regarding their Scotts Bluff experience.

Rather than confining the Jackson art to a single gallery/exhibit, pieces with a direct connection to Scotts Bluff should be used appropriately throughout other areas of the visitor center exhibits and in AV program, as well as on wayside exhibits (where appropriate) throughout the park. Sale publications should be included in the cooperating association planning, and, as mentioned earlier, the paintings also would continue to be available on the park web site.

**Change Over Time.** The focus of this exhibit will be on Theme 6. This exhibit concept can be looked at through the scope of geologic time and through the span of human history. While this plan proposes that the bulk of the geologic story be told outdoors (especially at the bluff summit and along the Saddle Rock Trail) a brief introduction should be provided in the visitor center.

The changes over the span of human interaction with the area can include more of the American Indian experience – i.e. trade routes, game, climate change, etc. This also would be a place to present the Hiram Scott story. The emigrant trail experience component might illustrate trail



improvements over time, the role of the military, establishment of roadhouses, development of freight hauling companies, etc.

### **United States Military Presence.**

This exhibit will focus on Theme 6. Although included in the Change Over Time and possibly the People exhibit concepts, the U.S. military story deserves some interpretation in light of the Fort Mitchell story. Visitors coming from or planning a stop at nearby Fort Laramie encounter a very in-depth interpretation of the military presence in the west, but the relevance definitely applies to Scotts Bluff and beyond. Visitors should come to appreciate the role of the military along the trails. This would include the impacts of military law, trail improvements, protection of trail users, relations with the Indians, and the importance of the presence of the United States flag.

In developing these and other exhibit concepts, media designers should reuse one or both of the dioramas from the current exhibits. These were developed by WPA artists during the Great Depression. The dioramas themselves can connect directly to various interpretive themes, including the one relating the CCC, another 1930s public works program that, among other achievements, built the visitor center.

### **Publications**

It is proposed that the cooperating association bookstore in the re-designed visitor center take on the look and feel of a trading post along the historic trails. Using this as a design theme will give visitors a new visual impression, reinforce the importance of trading posts, and possibly allow for some minimal interpretation.

Since people staffing the information desk will also handle bookstore

sales, it is important that the sales area be located within view of the information desk. Also, if the new theater is to be used for evening programs, a way to close off the sales displays should be considered in the design.

The cooperating association and monument staff need to conduct a scope of sales study. This process evaluates each sales item with regard to price, intended audiences, and interpretive theme(s) addressed. The study will identify areas of strength as well as areas that could be the focus of a publications program. And a publications program needs to be developed and implemented. Some obvious needs include a new book on Scotts Bluff, the Jackson paintings, and possibly updating and publishing a new official handbook.

The official park brochure needs to be revised. A new and larger map is needed so that visitors can use it to plan their visit and navigate the roads and trails. The narrative should be revised to better interpret the trail experience.

The site bulletin program needs to be continually evaluated to determine which items are used most, and which may be obsolete or unnecessary. The format of the scope of sales mentioned above could be adapted to the site bulletins which might also identify the need for new publications. In addition, it is recommended that some or all of the site bulletins be placed on-line so that visitors can download or print them at home or at the park. Likewise, a display of available site bulletins should continue to be located near the information desk. Site bulletins should generally support one or more of the interpretive themes. Caution is advised to guard against producing large numbers of site bulletins which may not serve useful purposes for

most visitors or enhance knowledge about the interpretive themes.

### **AV Program and Theater**

The need for a designated space to show the primary park AV program and for indoor evening programs has been stressed throughout this LRIP. HFC audiovisual producers and theater designers have for decades recommended that theater seating be developed for a minimum of one bus group (50-65 people) or multiples thereof. This allows all members of a school or commercial bus tour group to see the program in one sitting. Most teachers do not like to split their students into separate groups and many commercial bus tours, who are often on tight time schedules, will sometimes avoid a film or even a park if they have to split their groups up.

This LRIP recommends a flat floor, moveable seating theater that will accommodate 65-70 people. This will accommodate most school and commercial bus groups, and provide sufficient seating for indoor evening programs and other activities. The current building has adequate ceiling heights, and with professional theater design consultation, the necessary projection lengths, screen size, height, and seating design can be developed. The main AV program could be projected without the need for a projection booth; however, the use of the theater for a variety of evening programs will require flexibility with equipment and a projection booth is recommended.

A suggested concept for the film is "A Common Corridor through Time." This concept will bring many interpretive themes together and identify the individual historic trails. The focal point of the film will be Scotts Bluff and its immediate area (Ash Hollow to Guernsey or possibly Casper), and it will also emphasize the contrast in landforms

from the plains. Elements of Themes 1, 2, 4, and 5 would be specifically addressed.

The film will make heavy use of Scotts Bluff-related personal accounts through the use of historic journals, diaries, and newspaper articles. It will consider using live action to depict emotions, and the wide variety and large volume of people who passed by the site. The Oregon California Trail Association (OCTA) is proposing a documentary in the near future which could provide a unique partnership opportunity.

It is recommended that a 28-30 minute film be produced, but that it be edited to a 12-15 minute version for showing in the theater. The longer film would be available for sale in the bookstore and for television broadcast. In addition, a 2-3 minute version should be produced for internet web streaming.

In developing a design for the theater, designers should consider adapting the concept of an object theater. This would potentially provide an AV viewing space that would blend with the exhibits. This object theater concept has been used in other museum/visitor center settings, and could be explored here.

### **Amphitheater**

The amphitheater will be included in the redesign of the visitor center, and its location may shift slightly. The redesign should consider a new screen, projection booth, and professional quality sound system. Seats with backs will provide more comfort for longer programs. While the view of the bluffs is a key element in the current design, the new facility should provide better screening of the maintenance area.



Oregon Trail Pathway

## Roads and Trails

In addition to a parkwide directional sign plan, wayside exhibit proposal, and the development of electronic messaging devices, certain designated signs relating to or interpreting the historic trails should incorporate standard NPS National Historic Trail design elements. The latter would include use of the national trail logos; however, the shared graphic identity design should be consistent throughout the park.

### Oregon Trail

The park-maintained portion of the Oregon Trail leads from the parking lot, past the covered wagons, to the Jackson campsite. A portion of this trail is paved and ADA accessible. This provides an easy opportunity for visitors to follow a portion of the actual route and to make meaningful connection with primary resources. However, the trail (except for the short segment to the wagons) is little used.

This issue will be addressed by the parkwide wayside exhibit proposal and the directional sign study. The trail should be better identified and a trailhead wayside exhibit with

proper artwork, etc., should encourage people to follow the trail.

Create a more compelling outdoor wagon exhibit. The use of some sculptural elements going beyond the wagons will help lure visitors further along the trail, and could represent some of the items people discarded as traveling became more difficult. Other items could be placed inside the wagons, showing the things that were considered essential. Note: These items would not be original or even reproduction pieces, but sculpted objects that can withstand the elements and resist potential vandalism. Sculptured animals or even people could be tastefully added to the scene.

Imbed quotes into the asphalt surface of the paved portion of the trail. These would be unobtrusive and would not adversely impact the resource; however, they would attract visitor attention and motivate many to follow the trail to find the next quote.

### Saddle Rock Trail

As the most popular trail in the park, interpretation on the Saddle Rock Trail will focus primarily on elements of the third interpretive



Historic Trail Markers

theme, geology. This would be accomplished by some wayside exhibits and through the use of electronic message technology. While a few wayside exhibits may be placed on the steep/rocky portions of the trail, most would likely be at the top or along the lower portion of the trail. Some could also be placed along the accessible portion of the trail nearer the visitor center. In addition to interpreting the physical geology, visitors also would learn how geologic processes have affected the people in the area and was a factor in determining the route of the trails.

With the rapid change in electronic messaging technology, no recommendations regarding specific devices are made here. It is, however, recommended that this technology rely basically on visitor-owned devices such as cell phones, MP3 players, etc. The park would provide short interpretive programs that could be downloaded from the park web site or at a station in the visitor center. The massaging would be layered so that visitors could delve into greater detail if desired. This technology also will allow visitors to individually select stops in any order, or to skip any they choose.



Tunnel on Saddle Rock Trail

## Summit Road

There are no pullouts along the Summit Road; however, personal services interpretation will continue to be provided through the NPS van tours. The shuttle driver will continue to provide short interpretive messages. People who drive their own vehicles will also be able to use the electronic messaging devices mentioned in the previous section to provide some en-route interpretation.

Most of the interpretation, however, would continue to be provided at the summit and along the short walking trails to key viewpoints. In addition to the electronic interpretive program, traditional wayside exhibits will continue to provide much of the site-specific interpretation at the summit. In summer interpretive staff will continue to be stationed at the summit to provide informal interpretation and possibly occasional guided walks.

Themes 3 and 8 would be the focus of most of the interpretation along the road; however, at the summit the large panoramas will provide opportunities to also interpret elements of themes 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6.



Lower segment of  
Saddle Rock Trail





Start of the Summit Road

Specific wayside exhibit recommendations at the summit will be made through the parkwide wayside exhibit proposal; however, some of the important topics that would be addressed would include: the visible CCC projects, changes over time, the badlands, the routes of the trails (including that of the Mormon Trail to the north of the bluff), erosion of the bluffs, and American Indian connections to the area and specifically to the bluffs.

### Partnership Opportunities

Continued and expanded partnerships with others in the community and throughout the region will remain a crucial and integral part of the overall interpretive program at Scotts Bluff National Monument. Specific partnership related recommendations for this LRIP are:

- Provide an informational exhibit (with appropriate brochures) at partner sites to inform visitors of the existing network and to encourage them to visit other sites in the area. These exhibits also would let people know what primary themes and resources are represented at the various sites.
- Explore the potential of developing a multi-site auto tour.
- Increase partnerships with natural areas that address related themes (i.e. geology, plains ecology, climate change).
- Establish and maintain active web site links with key trail organizations such as the Oregon & California Trails Association (OCTA) and the National Pony Express Association (NPEA).
- Establish a formal cooperative agreement with the Organization of American Historians (OAH) for consultation, assessment, scholarship, and historic accuracy.
- Continue close relations with the NPS National Trails Office in Salt Lake City.
- Establish a partnership with the Chadron State College's Geology Department.
- Develop stronger relations with American Indian tribes that are associated with Scotts Bluff. Assistance in this area can be obtained from NTSL and the Midwest Regional Office.
- Foster partnerships within the Robidoux Pass area to encourage visitors to go there and to provide necessary interpretation (i.e. wayside exhibits).

Reconstructed Robidoux  
Trading Post



- Explore opportunities to develop education programs that present a unified and easy to use format for teachers to select activities and sites that best meet their needs.
- Maintain connections with other area attractions and service providers to share information and ideas for continually improving the overall visitor experience, and to ensure that everyone has access to accurate and current information.

### Personal Services

A variety of personal services programs and activities will continue to be an essential component of the overall interpretive program for Scotts Bluff National Monument. These activities will have the unparalleled advantage of being inspiring, versatile, alive, and tailored to the needs of individuals and groups. An interpretive presence helps with the protection of fragile resources. Interpreters, whether behind an information desk, roving, leading a tour, giving a talk, or conducting a demonstration, are the best interactive tool in enabling visitors to experience, understand, appreciate, and make personal and intellectual connections with the resources.

The park will continue providing living history programs; however, special emphasis should continue in the direction of formal interpretive talks of various lengths on theme-related topics, roving interpretation, evening programs, and shuttle tours along the Summit Road by uniformed NPS interpreters. The park should continue to host a variety of special events which promote its diverse interpretive themes and history.

Besides the fact that the park does not have an interpretive specialist or a full-time permanent interpretive park ranger, the number of front line interpreters has decreased over the years. This has subsequently reduced the number of programs offered and the length of the season for personal services. Currently most seasonal interpreters and volunteers work from Memorial Day to mid-August. Due to the nature of visitation and interest from the local community, it is recommended that the season be extended up through and including the months of April through October. This would include the extension of the season for evening programs which could move into the new proposed theater as the weather turns colder.

Since personal services interpretive programs are relatively easy to change, the activities should be evaluated on a regular basis to discontinue those that are not effective, modify and improve those that require it, and validate those that are successful.

## Education Program

Future growth of the park education program is primarily contingent on having an education specialist (see Staffing section). This would allow the park to:

- Develop and expand the number of curriculum-based programs to address additional grades and topics.
- Reach broader audiences, including those that may not be able to visit in person.
- Provide education materials on-line.
- Increase the number of visits to schools.
- Reinstitute and expand teacher training workshops to enable schools to make the best use of park resources and pre and post-visit materials.
- Create better communication and coordination with other organizations that interpret similar resources and themes.
- Develop and implement a distance learning program using existing distance learning networks in the State of Nebraska.

With a strong program and ties directly to local, state, and national curriculum standards, more schools will see the value of using the park to help meet their needs. This can be accomplished by involving educators directly in the development of both general and specific activities and curriculum guides.

Education materials developed for the in-park program may also have

value for home-schooled students and groups that may never be able to visit in person. Many of these materials could be placed on the park web site. Some items could be offered as free downloads; other materials could be offered for sale on-site or on-line through the cooperating association, or offered free to those who participate in teacher workshops.

Park partner sites with theme-related resources should work together to explore how each can develop educational goals and programs to meet the needs of different educational groups. This will prevent duplication of effort and capitalize on each site's strengths. If marketed as a package to educators, it will make it easier for teachers to select programs and sites that best address different curriculum goals and standards.

## Special Populations

Provisions will be made to accommodate the needs of special populations who visit Scotts Bluff National Monument. Special populations are identified as those with sight, hearing, learning, and mobility impairments; visitors who do not speak English; and the elderly and young children.

Public Law 90-480, the Architectural Barriers Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 establish standards for physical access. Other regulations, laws, and standards include Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Director's Orders No. 42, and the Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities in National Park Service Programs, Facilities, and Services. All newly constructed facilities, as a matter of course, will be designed for accessibility for physically disabled visitors and employees.

Every effort will be made to provide full access to interpretive media and programs to ensure that people with physical and mental disabilities, as well as people who do not speak or understand English, have access to the same information necessary for a safe and meaningful visit to Scotts Bluff National Monument. All new interpretive media will follow the standards for accessibility as described in the NPS, October 2007 Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media. These guidelines can be found on the Harpers Ferry Center web site at: <http://www.nps.gov/hfc/pdf/accessibility/access-guide-oct2007.pdf>.

Informational and interpretive media in the redesigned visitor center will include some audio components which will appeal to broad learning styles, and will offer added accessibility for those with visual impairments. This will include audio description of the exhibit experience. Tactile elements should be used wherever they will enrich the experience for all, and where they may be critical for accessibility.

### **Research Needs**

Park interpretive staff needs to continue working closely with resource management staff to keep up to date on research activities and results. Resource management specialists should be encouraged to present regular briefings on projects to the entire park staff, including interpreters. Agency and contracted researchers also should be encouraged or instructed to produce executive summaries and programs that translate research results into layman terms for park staff and the public.

Since the last formal visitor survey was done in 1991, it is time for a new one. The park needs to continue

learning about its visitors and visitation trends: Who visits? What are their motivations, expectations, and satisfaction levels? What can be done to increase the length of visits and interaction with park resources? Who doesn't visit and why? How do the answers to these and other questions vary from season to season, or from the 1991 survey? How do visitors and visitor experiences compare to other theme-related sites?

Research also is important in the development of specific media and programs and will be planned as part of all substantial media projects and specialized programming. This should definitely be a part of the visitor center redesign project. Front-end evaluations would query potential visitors before products and activities are developed. This type of research is targeted so that practical use can be made of the results. Formative evaluations would be conducted during conceptual design, and would test inexpensive mock-ups of interpretive media and programs before fully investing in final products. Summative evaluations are valuable in helping to determine the effectiveness of final media, facilities, and programs – i.e. whether the intended themes are being communicated, if people actually make use of the information, or if visitor behavior is affected.

Finally, an Organization of American Historians (OAH) review is recommended to assess the historical accuracy, effectiveness, and professional quality of the interpretive media and programs. Monument staff should seek to address suggestions made by the review in relation to interpretive media, personal services, library acquisitions, and research needs.



## Library and Collection Needs

The redesign of the visitor center will relocate the park library from the basement to the main floor. The new space needs to be large enough to accommodate the existing material, plus provide for the continued addition of more items over time. The library also functions as a place for meetings, and unless separate meeting space is planned in the new design, it should continue to be factored as part of the library.

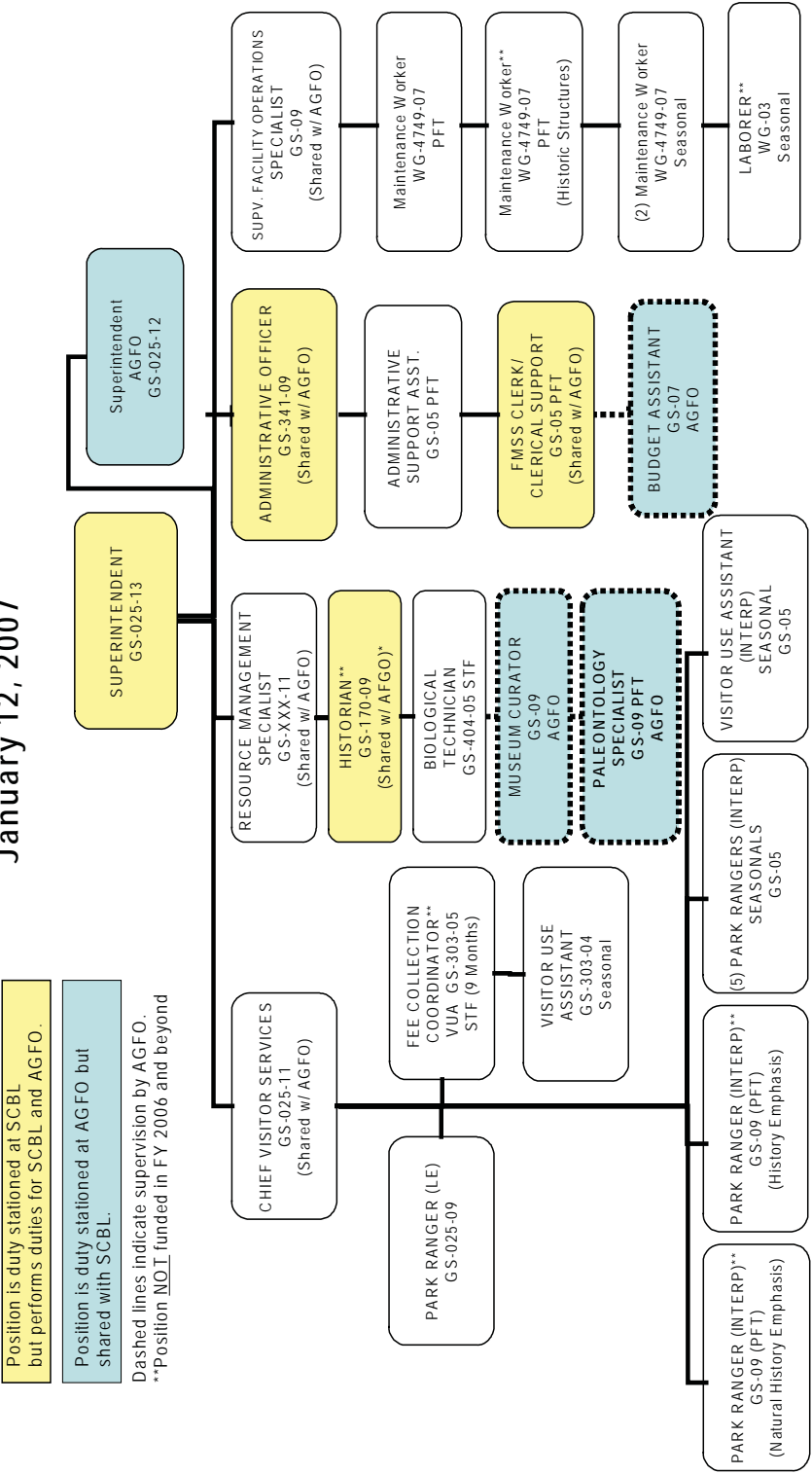
The current museum collection space is full. Although it serves the needs of the current collection, there is no room for expansion. An expanded climate controlled collection storage facility in the basement of the visitor center will be part of the building redesign.

## Staffing Needs

The following table shows the current and projected staffing plan required for full implementation of the recommendations in this long-range interpretive plan. Information in the table is further supported by the monument's core organization chart.

Permanent Positions	Existing				New		
	Grade	Hours	FTE		Hours	FTE	Total
Chief Park Ranger	11	2080	1.0		0	0.0	1.0
Interpretive Specialist*	9	0	0.0		2080	1.0	1.0
Historian	9	0	0.0		1040	0.5	0.5 Shared w/AGFO
Park Ranger, Interpretation - History Emphasis	9	0	0.0		2080	1.0	1.0
Park Ranger, Interpretation - Natural History Emphasis	9	0	0.0		2080	1.0	1.0
Sub-total Permanent Positions			1.0			3.5	
<b>Total Permanent Positions</b>				<b>4.5</b>			
Seasonal Positions	Existing				New		
	Grade	Hours	FTE		Hours	FTE	Total
Park Ranger, Interpretation (5)	5	1039	2.5		0	0.0	2.5
Sub-total Seasonal Positions			2.5			0.0	
<b>Total Seasonal Positions</b>				<b>2.5</b>			
* = New position not identified on Core Operations Organization Chart							

SCOTTS BLUFF NATIONAL MONUMENT  
CORE ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE (ONPS BASE FUNDED)  
NOTE: Exceeds ONPS Base Budget  
January 12, 2007



# SUMMARIES

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## Summary of Products and Actions

The following is a summation of the action items and products proposed in this long-range interpretive plan. Each of these items is described in greater detail in the narrative sections of this document. This list is designed to help develop the implementation schedule, annual and long-term priorities, assignment of responsibilities, and cost estimates.

It must be emphasized that the following list deals specifically with actions and products for media and programs related directly to information, orientation, interpretation, and education. Although new and redesigned facilities are proposed or referenced, recommendations related to these projects will be developed through other planning and design efforts. Staffing requirements to implement and maintain the following actions are identified in the Staffing section.

### Information and Orientation

- Evaluate directional sign system
- Review/update information produced in-house & by external sources (ongoing).
- Enhance/expand park web site and links with park partners (ongoing).
- Evaluate installation of Traveler's Information System (TIS) and/or the cell phone orientation system for best fit.
- Redesign official park brochure.
- Explore development of a tri-park newsletter.

### Visitor Center

- Develop new information desk and associated lobby media.
- Develop new exhibits, some with AV and/or interactive elements.
- Develop new cooperating association sales area.

- Design new AV theater.
- Produce new primary AV program.
- Redesign amphitheater including new screen, seating, & sound system.
- Conduct front-end, formative, and summative evaluations of media.
- Conduct cooperating association scope of sales study.
- Design new park library/meeting room.
- Design new collection storage area.

### Roads and Trails

- Develop & implement parkwide wayside exhibit proposal.
- Develop electronic messaging system for download to visitor-owned devices.
- Design sculptural interpretive elements along developed segment of the Oregon Trail.

### Partnership Opportunities

- Develop networking informational exhibits at partner sites.
- Develop partnerships with management agencies of the Horse Creek Treaty site.
- Explore the potential of developing a multi-site auto tour.
- Increase partnerships with natural areas that address related themes .
- Establish and maintain active web site links with key trail organizations.
- Establish a formal cooperative agreement with the Organization of American Historians (OAH).
- Continue close relations with the NPS National Trails Office (NTSL) in Salt Lake City.
- Establish a partnership with the Chadron State College.
- Strengthen relations with associated American Indian tribes.
- Explore partnership opportunities for interpreting resources at Robidoux Pass.

### **Personal Services**

- Expand season for personal services interpretive programs.
- Continue offering variety of personal services activities & programs.
- Evaluate effectiveness of all programs (ongoing).

### **Education Program**

- Develop and expand the number of curriculum-based programs.
- Provide education materials on-line.
- Increase the number of visits to schools.
- Reinstitute and expand teacher training workshops.
- Explore opportunities with partners to share education program activities.

## **Implementation Plan**

### **Short Term (1-3 years)**

- Information and Orientation
  - Review/update information produced in-house & by external sources. (ongoing)
  - Enhance/expand park website and links with partners. (ongoing)
  - Explore development of a tri-park newsletter.
- Visitor Center
  - Conduct cooperating association Scope of Sales study.
- Partnership Opportunities
  - Increase partnerships with natural areas that address related themes.
  - Establish and maintain active website links with key trail organizations.
  - Establish a formal cooperative agreement with the Organization of American Historians (OAH)
  - Continue close relations with the NPS National Trails Office in Salt Lake City.

### **Personal Services**

- Expand interpretive season for personal services programs.
- Continue offering variety of personal services activities and programs.
- Evaluate effectiveness of all programs. (ongoing)

### **Staffing**

- Develop OFS statement for the base funding increase for an Interpretive Specialist to coordinate park's education curriculum.
- Develop OFS statement for the base funding increase for a Historian position shared between Scotts Bluff and Agate Fossil Beds National Monuments.
- Develop OFS statement for the base funding increase for a full-time Interpretive Park Ranger with a natural history background.

### **Medium Term (3-7 years)**

- Information and Orientation
  - Evaluate directional sign system.
  - Evaluate installation of Traveler's Information System (TIS) and/or cell phone orientation for best fit.
  - Redesign official park brochure.
- Roads and Trails
  - Develop electronic messaging system for download to visitor-owned devices.
- Partnership Opportunities
  - Develop networking informational exhibits at partner sites.
  - Explore potential of developing a multi-site auto tour.



- Establish partnership with Chadron State College.
- Strengthen relations with associated American Indian tribes.
- Explore partnership opportunities for interpreting resources at Robidoux Pass.
- Develop partnerships with management agencies of the Horse Creek Treaty site.

### **Long Term (>7 years)**

Scotts Bluff National Monument has prepared a Project Management Information System (PMIS) statement for the renovation/ addition to its visitor center and museum. The project is competitive and will incorporate a number of the bulleted items identified in the LRIP. Without knowing the funding date for the PMIS statement, the bulleted items are listed under the Long Term objectives, with the purpose being to keep the LRIP as current as possible. Should funding for the renovation materialize prior to the 7-year mark, it is understood that many of the bulleted items will occur with the renovation process, requiring a reprioritization of the remaining items.

- Visitor Center
  - Develop new information desk and associated lobby media.
  - Develop new exhibits, some with AV and/or interactive elements.
  - Develop new cooperating association sales area.
  - Design new AV theater.
  - Produce new primary AV program.
  - Redesign amphitheater including new screen, seating, and sound system.
  - Conduct front-end, formative, and summative evaluations of media.
- Roads and Trails
  - Design new park library/ meeting room.
  - Design new collection storage area.
  - Develop and implement parkwide wayside exhibit proposal.
  - Design sculptural interpretive elements along developed segment of the Oregon Trail.
- Education Program
  - Develop and expand the number of curriculum-based programs.
  - Provide education materials on-line.
  - Increase the number of visits to schools.
  - Reinstate and expand teacher training workshops.
  - Explore opportunities with partners to share education program activities.
- Staffing
  - Upon receipt of a base funding increase, recruit and hire an Interpretive Specialist.
  - Upon receipt of a base funding increase, recruit and hire a Historian to be shared with Agate Fossil Beds National Monument.
  - Upon receipt of a base funding increase, recruit and hire a full-time Interpretive Park Ranger with a natural history background.

## Planning Team and Consultants

### Scotts Bluff National Monument

Ken Mabery, Superintendent  
Pete Swisher, Chief Ranger  
Robert Manasek, Resource Management Specialist  
Eric Haugland, Park Ranger

### Park Partners and Consultants

Steve Fullmer, Park Ranger, Fort Laramie National Historic Site  
Mark Hertig, Museum Curator, Agate Fossil Beds National Monument  
Chuck Milliken, Interpretive Planner, National Trails System Salt Lake City Office  
Loren Pospisil, Site Supervisor, Chimney Rock National Historic Site  
Barb Netherland, Executive Director, North Platte Valley Museum  
Patrick McCune, Curator of Exhibits, National Historic Trails Interpretive Center, BLM, Casper, WY

Jim Cannia, Hydrologist, Nebraska Water Science Center, USGS  
Mert Davis, Retired, Western Nebraska Community College  
Jolene Kaufman, Business Manager, Oregon Trail Museum Association  
Wil Voss, Pastor, Lakota Lutheran Center

### Midwest Regional Office

Tom Richter, Chief of Interpretation and Education  
Roberta Wendel, Interpretive Media Specialist  
Mark Wolterman, Architect

### Harpers Ferry Center

David Guiney, Interpretive Media Specialist  
Mark Southern, Deputy Associate Manager, Audiovisual Arts  
Paul Lee, Interpretive Planner



Members of the planning team



Covered wagon exhibit on  
Oregon Trail Pathway